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21. REDISCOVERY OF CRITICALLY ENDANGERED AIR BREATHING CATFISH *CLARIAS DAYI* HORA PISCES: CLARIDAE, AT MUDUMALAI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, TAMIL NADU

During fieldwork at Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu, as part of our research program on "Diversity, Ecological Structure and Conservation of Threatened fishes of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR)" we collected two specimens of air-breathing catfish *Clarias dayi* Hora, from Ombatta Swamp, a part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. The species is commonly called the Malabar Clariid and Magur and popularly known as Masarai in Tamil and Muzhi in Malayalam. It was originally described from Wynaad in Kerala. The present collection is a rediscovery after 64 years at a new locality.

Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary is situated

in the Western Ghats of Nilgiri district, Tamil Nadu (11° 30'-11° 39' N; 76° 27'-76° 43' E). Its total area is 321 sq. km, including 103 sq. km of the National Park. Ombatta Todu forms Ombatta swamp before it joins Bidar halla, a tributary of river Moyar, the main water source for Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary.

Earlier record

Clarias dussumieri (nec Valenciennes) Day (partim), 1877, Fishes of India: 484; Day (partim), 1889, Fauna of British India, Fishes 1: 117.

Clarias Dayi Hora, 1936, Rec. Indian Mus.

38(3): 350, fig. 4c (type locality: Wynaad, Kerala); Misra (partim), 1976 Fauna of India, Pisces (2nd edn) 3:129.

Clarias dussumieri dayi; Silas, 1952, Proc. nat. Inst. Sci. India.

Day (1877) collected a single specimen (7 inches long) of this species from Wynaad in Kerala. But he misidentified the specimen as *Clarias dussumieri Valenciennes* (Day 1877, 1889). Later Hora (1936) re-examined Day's collection and he described the same specimen as a new species *Clarias dayi* Hora.

According to the IUCN category, it is almost extinct, as it has not been reported anywhere in India since it was first described by Hora in 1936. Despite much work in Western Ghats of Nilgiri, Wynaad hills (Hora 1937, 1938, 1942; Silas 1951a, b; Rajan 1955; Jayaram 1981; Jayaram *et al.*, 1982; Rema Devi and Indra 1988; Easa and Basha 1995; Easa and Shaji 1997) it has not been reported again.

During this study, we did not find *Clarias dayi* Hora from the original type locality (Wynaad hills), but our present collection from Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary shows its presence and range extension in this sanctuary: a rediscovery after 64 years at a new locality.

Diagnosis

D. 70; P. 1/8; V. 1/5; A. 57; C. 16.

Body elongate, head depressed; mouth terminal; 8 barbels, short, not extending beyond eyes; nasal barbels shorter than half of head length; dorsal fin inserted behind pectoral fin

tip; pectoral spine strong, serrated on its outer edge only; colour dark on back, lighter on side.

Distribution

Day collected a single specimen from Wynaad hills, Western Ghats of Kerala, India (Day 1877, 1889; Hora 1936; Misra 1976; Talwar and Jhingran 1991). The present collection indicates a range extension to Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu.

Status

Critically endangered (Molur and Walker 1998).

Habitat

Inhabits fast flowing streams and palustrine wetlands.

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22. SOME INGENIOUS METHODS OF FISHING

During a visit to Karwar, Karnataka State, I came across a peculiar method of catching the common marine catfish *Arius dussumieri*. This method seems to be unique to the region and adopted by amateur fishermen after a good deal of practice. I have already described some methods of catching live marine fish for display in aquaria (*Hornbill* 1986(4): 11-15, 36).

On May 27, 1990, amateur fishermen selected a tidal pool slightly high up on the beach. After heavy rains, at about 1630 hrs, I saw juveniles of *Arius* spp. coming in with the tide in huge numbers. Each fisherman targeted a fish and hit it repeatedly with a rubber slipper, so that the fish was temporarily stunned. It was then picked up carefully and placed in a tidal pool higher up on the beach, or merely put into a cloth bag. Sometimes the 'hit' resulted in the fish's dorsal spine getting stuck in the slipper and the fisherman carefully removed it and put it in the bag or tidal pool. The fish swam very fast, and sometimes the fisherman merely pushed it towards the shore to incapacitate it. This method

of fishing was repeated until the incoming stock of fish was exhausted. There were scores of fishermen, and there was enough for everyone to take home, the average catch being 250 to 300 fish in an hour. This went on from 1645 to 1915 hrs, and it is surmised that each person got about 500 to 600 fish. I tried my hand at this type of fishing, but could not catch more than six fish over half an hour. Either my aim was bad, or the blow was not enough to stun the fish, I was able to bring in about a dozen fish alive. Another unique aspect of this method was that it was done only on one day: I was informed that this phenomenon occurs only once a year.

The other strange method of fishing involved the 'hook and drag' method. This was seen at the Girgaum Chowpatty Bay in South Mumbai, from the parapet wall at Marine Drive. Adult *Mugil* spp., *Lates calcarifer*, *Polynemus heptadactylus*, *Strongylura strongylura*, *Hemirhamphus* spp. were usually caught by this method, at high tide. The method involved whirling and releasing a non-baited line with a